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CANADA AND THE WAR

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Publications

THREE YEARS OF WAR

The real issue in the struggle

BROADCAST BY


Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING, M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada

SEPTEMBER 10, 1942



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Today, Canada enters upon the fourth year of war. Three years ago, it was difficult for men and women anywhere to believe what was told them of the probable duration of the war. Much less were they prepared to believe that Hitler's aim was world conquest. I doubt if peoples whose countries have not been invaded even yet appreciate the magnitude of the enemy's designs. Only those who themselves have been the victims of Nazi or Japanese deception, terrorism and violence have begun to comprehend the real issue.

At the time of Britain's entry into the war, speaking of the attack upon Poland by the armed forces of Germany, I said, in a nation-wide broadcast: "The fate of a single city, the preservation of the independence of a particular nation are the occasion, not the real cause of the present conflict." Referring to Hitler's methods and aim, I added: "It is this reliance upon force, this lust for conquest, this determination to dominate throughout the world which is the real cause of the war that today threatens the freedom of mankind." Those words may have seemed extravagant at the

time they were used three years ago. I question, however, if today any intelligent person will dispute their truth. That the war today "threatens the freedom of mankind" is abundantly clear.

I should like to draw a distinction tonight, as I did three years ago, between the cause of the war, and the real *issue* in the war. The cause, as I then said, was the lust for conquest—world domination. The real issue, however, goes even deeper. More than world domination is involved. Domination need not be wholly evil. You have heard it said that the best type of ruler is a benevolent despot. To have the world controlled by benevolence, however absolute the control, might not be an unmixed blessing. But a world ruled by a tyrant, himself the incarnation of evil, would not be a blessing in any form—it would be an unmixed curse. Yet, that would be the fate of the world should the enemy triumph in the conflict between the Axis powers and the United Nations.

The Real Issue in the War

In three years of war, we have become only too familiar with the evidences of the satanic power of the enemy. Our minds have recoiled from the horrors, brutalities and atrocities which, since Poland was attacked, have been recorded day by day. They, however, are but surface indications of something deeper and more malevolent. The Nazi purpose is to destroy every belief, and to subvert every institution which, from childhood's days, men and women of the free countries of the world have been taught to reverence. Their aim is the total destruction of Christian civilization. Some time before the invasion of Poland, Hitler himself said: "Whoever lights the torch of war in Europe can wish for nothing but chaos". "Nothing but chaos!"—that represents the sum of what Nazi Germany, thus far, has contributed to the world.

I have seen nowhere a truer statement of the real issue in this war than one by Miss Audrey Alexandra Brown, a young Canadian whose name and writings are, I am sure, familiar to many of you. Miss Brown completely rejects the idea that nothing is happening now which did not happen in the dark ages, or under earlier despotisms. She defines the issue in these words: "Certainly, brutality and force are not new among men. It has always been true that, as the Psalms have it, 'the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.' Men who are little more than savages can be expected to behave as beasts. But never before in history has a nominally civilized, a nominally Christian nation deliberately made the profession, 'Evil, be thou my good'. This war is unlike all other wars, for the deformed monstrosities that sheltered in darkness have crawled out of that darkness and openly challenged the world for the possession of its soul. They no longer fight under cover, they flaunt in steel. For Germany to win this war would not mean merely a re-drawing of boundaries or a shift in sovereignty. It would mean the destruction of the free spirit of man."

I wish those words, inscribed on parchment, might be framed and hung upon the walls of every home.

The aim of Nazi Germany and her militarist Japanese partner is not merely the conquest of territory, not even world domination in itself. The forces of evil, incarnated in the Axis powers, are seeking to possess the world's soul, and to destroy the free spirit of man. They will accomplish this evil purpose unless they themselves are totally destroyed.

The Greatness of the Cause

The consequences of this conflict no living man or woman can possibly hope to escape. As the outcome of this war, mankind will either revert to a condition of barbarity and savagery resulting from world chaos; or, by release from bondage, humanity will rise into a new order of social justice and world security. Three years of war have made the issue clear to the peoples of the Old World, in Europe and Asia alike. To each one of us in the New World the issue must become equally clear. As individuals and as nations, we must realize the need to make the utmost contribution of which we are capable to ensure the defeat of the enemy, and the ultimate triumph of a righteous cause.

I am stressing again tonight the real issue of the war for two reasons. The first is to bring home to every one just what is at stake in this world conflict. The other is to make us appreciate, at its true value, the sacrifice of human life involved in the conflict. Already many of the bravest of our land have given their lives in mortal combat against the evil forces that have been loosed upon the world. We may be sure that those who have given their lives in so great a cause have not failed of their eternal reward. It is well, however, that those who have been bereaved should appreciate the sacrifice of their loved ones at its true worth.

It was not merely to prevent the barbaric forces from beyond the waters of the Atlantic and of the Pacific from invading our shores and gaining possession of our land that young Canadians who fought at Hong Kong and at Dieppe, and in the skies over many lands, and upon the waters of many oceans, have given their lives. They have fought, and their lives have been sacrificed, that the world's soul may not be possessed by the powers of darkness; that the free spirit of man may not be destroyed; that evil, instead of good, may not be exalted in our midst for generations to come. Many of them may not have been fully conscious of how great was the cause for which they went forth to fight. I question if they thought of any call save that of duty. But something immortal had been stirring in their breasts. It impelled them to action. We think of them, one and all, as they truly are, a part of the chivalry of God.

Canada's Leadership in the New World

How, in three years of war, has Canada, as a nation, responded to the call? That is something, I am sure, of which you will expect to hear me speak tonight. In so doing, I should like you to think of Canada as a nation of the New World. Now that it is everywhere recognized that the war is a global war, a universal war, in that light alone can our contribution to the war effort of the United Nations be adequately appraised. We are told so often that so little publicity has been given to Canada's war effort, that I may be forgiven if I venture to say that, as a people, we can and should take a legitimate pride in the leadership which Canada has given to the other nations of the New World in the past three years.

Canada was the first to see the real issue and the first to make the decision to fight.

We were the first nation of the New World to support and to strengthen Britain when she alone stood between North America and a Nazi attack on this continent. The period following the disastrous campaign in the west of Europe and the collapse of France, has been described as Britain's finest hour. It will, I believe, detract nothing from Britain's honour to say that no period in the war reflects greater credit on Canada.

While most of the rest of the world expected Britain to share the fate of France, Canada sent everything we possessed, that had immediate military value, to help defend Britain from invasion. Canadian destroyers were sent to British waters, leaving our own coasts perilously exposed. Though greatly needed here, what air squadrons we had available were sent to Britain. Aircraft, required for training in Canada, were turned back in mid-Atlantic. All available small arms and ammunition were sent overseas to help fill the gap left by British losses in France. Canada's first division had been in Britain for some months. The despatch overseas of the second division was accelerated. Air training was intensified. Canada's faith in Britain's ability to hold out never wavered for a moment. The proof of it was given in action.

Just before French resistance collapsed, Canadian troops had actually landed in France, ready to go into battle. After the fall of France, ships of the Canadian navy assisted in the evacuation of British, Canadian and Polish soldiers from French territory. In these operations, the Canadian destroyer *Fraser* was lost off Bordeaux. The rescue of the survivors of the *Fraser* by the Canadian destroyer *Restigouche* was one of the most daring exploits of the evacuation.

Canada's Fighting Men in All Parts of the World

For a full year, from June 1940, to June 1941, Canada, next to Britain, was the strongest power actually at war with Nazi Germany. It was no exaggeration, when Mr. Churchill told the world

in September 1941, that without Canada's war effort the resistance of the British Empire could not have been maintained. It should never be forgotten that if that resistance had crumbled, freedom might have perished from the earth.

In addition to what we sent to Britain in the dark months of 1940, Canadian troops were despatched to Newfoundland, the West Indies and Iceland. For more than a year, Canada was the keeper of the Western approaches to the Northern bridge of islands between North America and Europe. When, in the summer of 1941, the United States began to share that task with us, we specially welcomed their support, both because it added strength to the common cause, and because it enabled our forces to move to still more advanced positions.

Canada was the first of the nations of the New World to take part in the war in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. Engineers of the Canadian army have strengthened the defences of Gibraltar. For many months Canadian airmen, numbered now in thousands, have been serving in the Middle East. Our fighting men—soldiers at Hong Kong, and airmen in India and Ceylon—were the first organized fighting forces from the New World to serve in Asia. At Dieppe, the other day, Canadian soldiers made up five-sixths of the forces that landed on the continent of Europe. Since 1940, our airmen have had a large and steadily increasing place in the bombing of Germany and occupied Europe.

The Vastness and Nearness of the Danger

We have just been afforded a striking example of the prowess our fighting forces have attained, and of the calibre of the men themselves. Having dropped their bombs on Saarbrücken at the early hour of two o'clock on Wednesday morning of last week, the entire crew of one of the bomber planes arrived here in our capital city, at midnight of the same day. In that short interval of time, they had not only returned to their base in Britain, but had also made a brief stop at a Canadian airport near Montreal. Their average age is $23\frac{1}{2}$ years. They all enlisted in the Canadian Air Force in 1940, and all went overseas during 1941. These young airmen served together in more than twenty raids over enemy territory, among the number being those on Emden and Cologne. It should be remembered that their endurance, as well as their achievements, have been paralleled by thousands of other young Canadians serving in British or Canadian squadrons.

The visit of these fighting airmen has helped to bring very near to us all, not only the young men themselves, but all of their comrades serving in the fighting forces of our country. Their visit, too, has made us increasingly conscious of the vastness and the nearness of existing danger. Distances from the battlefields of Europe and from Japanese bases in the Pacific, can no longer be reckoned by days. From now on they must be measured in hours.

The Growth of the Armed Forces

Modern war is many-sided in its nature. It calls for many-sided planning. In the first months of war we began to organize an expeditionary force, as well as an army for the territorial defence of Canada. We planned an orderly and a rapid expansion of the Canadian Navy. We planned too, even before the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was proposed, a speedy and vast expansion of air training. The proposal of a joint air training plan for Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom when made was immediately welcomed. The gigantic development soon outran what had been proposed.

A few figures may help to throw light upon the effectiveness with which the plans of 1939 have been realized during three years of war. To-day half a million volunteers are on active service in the three armed forces. To equal in numbers alone Canada's voluntary armed effort the United States would require, in proportion to its population, to have on active service, in its armed forces, six million men. In Canada more than forty thousand men, in addition, are engaged in compulsory military service for the duration of the war. Tens of thousands of Canadians are also patriotically devoting their spare time to service in the Reserve Army.

In three years of this war, without counting part-time service at all, more men are serving or have served in the Navy, Army and Air Forces of Canada than the total number who served both voluntarily and compulsorily in the whole of the last war.

The Canadian Army

Canada's expeditionary force in Britain is not simply an army corps; it is a Canadian Army. At the end of the present year it will consist of two complete corps, the second to be an armoured corps.

The progress of our expeditionary force may best be described in the words of its Commander-in-Chief. In his Christmas message of December last, General McNaughton said:—

“From a very small beginning the Canadian army has now grown to many tens of thousands of men and women. New units and formations and reserves have come to us as quickly as ships could be found to bring them here, and as they have arrived the organization of our military headquarters, reinforcement units, hospitals, schools, repair establishments and many other needed facilities have been pressed forward; meanwhile our engineer and signal and forestry corps have made their contribution to the life and welfare of the community.”

Speaking here in Canada at the Army Trade School at Hamilton last March, General McNaughton said:—

“I want you to know that we are operating the greatest mechanized force in the world. This is because in Canada we have progressed further along this line than has any other country . . . I go back with a feeling of great confidence in what we have behind us here in Canada.”

In a message to the Canadian Seamen's Union, after his return to England, the General said:—

“The Government and people of Canada are seeing to it that adequate reinforcements, and supplies of all natures of munitions and equipment, will be made available for Canada's army here.”

You will have noticed that since the adjournment of parliament, two large contingents of reinforcements and new units have landed in Britain.

In an interview with a party of Canadian editors, as recently as August 27th, General McNaughton repeated his previous statement that transportation across the North Atlantic had been the only limiting factor.

The Royal Canadian Navy

In 1939, the Canadian navy was the smallest of our three services. The navy now has well over 400 ships in operation, and a personnel of more than 40,000 men. Naval ship production is keeping pace with the supply of trained men, and an even balance is being maintained between ships and men. A day or two ago, Mr. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty in the United Kingdom, said that the Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy had been fighting the German U-boats with vigour and gallantry. This linking of the names of the British Navy and the Canadian Navy was a fitting recognition of the part the Canadian Navy has played in the task of convoying shipping across the North Atlantic, and in meeting the submarine menace.

The Royal Canadian Air Force

As for the Air Force, in deciding in 1939 to concentrate mainly on air training in the early stages of the war, Canada deliberately sacrificed the immediately spectacular, for slower but greater and more effective results. To-day, the results of Canadian air training are to be seen on almost every battle-front around the globe: along both our own coasts, in Newfoundland and Labrador, in Alaska, in India, in Egypt and the Middle East, in Britain, in the skies over Germany and conquered Europe, and in Russia.

The Economic Front

On the economic front, as in the military sphere, Canada in this war has also led the way among the nations of the New World. We have led in the transformation from a peace-time to a war-time economy. We have been first in the field of supply, as arsenal, granary and shipyard. We have been foremost in war taxation and finance; in the conservation of raw materials; in efforts to prevent profiteering and inflation; in the control of the cost of living; and in the over-all employment of manpower.

From the start, we determined to make every machine and munition of war we could make, and to produce as much of everything as we could produce. Motor vehicles, tanks, and guns have been exported on a gigantic scale. We have never limited our production to the needs of our own forces. Canadian weapons and munitions are being used in Egypt, in Russia, in the Southern Pacific, and in China. The output of Canadian shipyards has become a major factor in meeting one of the most imperative of war needs. As for foodstuffs, it is literally true that after Britain was cut off from European supplies in 1940, her people and her fighting men were saved from starvation by Canadian food. Canadian wheat and flour are now being sent in large quantities to Greece and to Russia. Canadian workmen and Canadian farmers are playing their full part in Canada's war effort.

Canadian Women and the War

I should like to pay a tribute to the splendid and growing part which women are taking in the achievement of an all-out Canadian effort.

The women in the nursing services have taken, as always, the pioneer role of women in wartime service. For many months, young women in the uniforms of the Canadian Women's Army Corps, and the Women's Division of the Royal Canadian Air Force have been on active service in all parts of Canada. Some are already overseas. All are performing a variety of tasks. Before many weeks, similar duties will be undertaken by the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service.

Equally worthy and equally essential work is being accomplished by the thousands of women in war industry. Their growing skill is adding daily to the mounting volume of machines and munitions of war issuing from Canadian factories and workshops. In factories, offices, shops and farms all over Canada, women, in increasing numbers, are doing work formerly performed by men.

The women who are keeping together the homes and families of our country, no less than the women directly engaged in war service, are helping to preserve the civilization our enemies are seeking to destroy.

The New World's Debt to the Old World

Three years of war have revealed to the world the might of the Axis powers. The years have also revealed their plans of world conquest. Germany was to strike first; Italy next, and finally Japan. In each case, attack was unprovoked. This, it seems to me, is most significant. It would never have occurred had the Axis powers not believed that, under their combined plan, they would be able to take on and to conquer the rest of the world. Let there be no mistake, the forces of tyranny still believe they are able to encircle the globe. Building upon their conquests in the Old World, they plan to press in upon the New. If we, on this continent, have thus far escaped invasion, either by Japanese forces from across the Pacific, or by German forces from across the Atlantic, it is because of the resistance of other nations.

To the peoples of Europe and of Asia who have been overpowered and over-run, their resistance may seem to them to have been in vain. I do not believe their resistance has been in vain. Every nation that resisted the foe, however short that resistance may have been, has contributed something to his ultimate defeat. Every day gained by their resistance has afforded precious time to the countries which are still free to build up their strength.

We who are still free can never forget the debt we owe to the people of Czechoslovakia, to the Poles, to the Norwegians, to the Dutch, to the Belgians, to the resisting French, to the Yugoslavs, and to the Greeks. We know what we owe to the peoples of Britain, of China and of Russia. But for the efforts and the sacrifices of all who have resisted, we might ere this have lost the liberty we still enjoy.

The Supreme Task

However questioning we may have been in the past, there can no longer be any doubt that, from the first day of the war, whatever our motives, we have, in very truth, been fighting for our own preservation, for our own survival. The nations of the New World are not sending their forces to the Old, whether it be across the Atlantic or across the Pacific to further any imperial cause. It is to destroy a common enemy and to keep the war away from our own soil.

No one can say how long it may take to stay the aggressor. That will depend on the effort of each and every individual, in all of the United Nations. We must gather our full strength for a supreme effort. To halt the aggressor is only the first step. To

cripple the enemy is the next. There will still remain the task of liberation. We are members one of another. It is not alone to save ourselves that we must continue to fight. Freedom must be restored to all. Those who have suffered so greatly have resisted the darkest forces of evil the world has ever known. Till these forces are totally destroyed, there can be no enduring peace.

As we dedicate our lives anew at the beginning of the fourth year of war, I quote again from Miss Audrey Alexandra Brown:

"Let us go forward with high hearts: knowing that we, too, in our measure, are wielders of the bright sword: we, too, in our measure, are the keepers of the keys: and to us also in our degree and of His Grace, God has granted the defence of the fortress of the soul of man and the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven."